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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [GJ](#) [XL](#)  
SUBJECT: GRENADA OPPOSITION TO U.S.: WE ARE NOT A THREAT

REF: A. BRIDGETOWN 429  
[1](#)B. GRENADA 23  
[1](#)C. BRIDGETOWN 294

Classified By: Poloff Michael Kelleher for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The leadership of Grenada's opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) is anxious that the USG understand the party is not led by unreconstructed communists who want to turn the country sharply to the left. The opposition leaders, several of whom were members of the People's Revolutionary Government that ruled Grenada from 1979 to 1983, wish to keep open a line of communication that will help the USG recognize that the NDC is not a threat to democracy in Grenada. They are concerned that the USG has been influenced by the rhetoric of Prime Minister Keith Mitchell, who often warns that opposition leaders have not disavowed their past and are intent upon somehow taking power through undemocratic means. Several NDC leaders fear that the USG could even attempt to prop up Mitchell's Government in order to prevent their winning the next election. Such anxiety demonstrates the high level of influence PM Mitchell is thought to have in the U.S., as well as the degree to which the former Marxist revolutionaries in the NDC remain influenced by Cold War era thinking. End summary.

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We Are Not a Threat  
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[1](#)2. (C) The opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) is committed to democracy in Grenada and has not been hijacked by the former communist revolutionaries in its ranks. This is the message from Opposition Leader Tillman Thomas and NDC Parliamentarian Peter David, who hope to dispel the effect of the harsh rhetoric typically used by Grenada PM Keith Mitchell and members of his Government to tar the NDC as a threat to democracy (ref C). Convinced that the PM may have created a negative view of the NDC among Washington policymakers, the party leadership hopes to keep open a line of communication with the USG through Emboffs and would like to visit the U.S. during the coming year.

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Would the U.S. Keep Us Out of Power?  
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[1](#)3. (C) Opposition Parliamentarian Peter David expressed to Poloff his worry that the USG would be uneasy about a NDC election victory. Such an outcome in the nation's next election, which is due by 2008, would see Grenada join Dominica, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines in a Caribbean sub-region of left-leaning governments. While

these are admittedly small countries, David asked if the USG might view such a development with alarm considering the apparent move to the left in Latin America. In order to prevent such an occurrence, David wondered aloud if outside forces might financially assist PM Keith Mitchell's ruling New National Party (NNP).

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A Disillusioned Leftist  
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¶4. (C) Peter David described himself to Poloff as a "disillusioned leftist" who has lost his taste for revolution. While retaining a somewhat socialist political philosophy and a degree of nostalgia for the heady days of revolution in Grenada, David admits to having accepted the reality of contemporary Grenada and said that the NDC would work with the private sector to develop the economy by expanding tourism and diversifying agriculture. He appears to have respect for party leader Tillman Thomas, who David believes is a man of principle willing to be held in a People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) jail for over two years during Grenada's revolutionary period in order to uphold his beliefs. David described Thomas as "incorruptible" in comparison to PM Mitchell, who many NDC supporters believe is a political opportunist lacking in core principles.

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PM Called an Opportunist and Hypocrite  
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¶5. (C) To illustrate PM Mitchell's opportunism, several knowledgeable observers told Poloff how in 1979 the future PM was responsible for sending weapons from the U.S. to Grenada, where they were used in the coup that brought the PRG to power. Mitchell was bitterly disappointed when the PRG failed to name him its Ambassador to the U.S., and then turned on his former comrades to become one of the communist regime's harshest detractors. This account of events could not be confirmed but is believed in Grenada and frequently used to lend credence to the hypocrisy behind the PM's frequent warnings regarding the former PRG members in the opposition.

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Revolutionaries Pulling the Strings  
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¶6. (C) Critics of the NDC contend that party leader Tillman Thomas is a puppet whose strings are pulled by a handful of former PRG members that actually lead the party. Thomas, however, denies that these individuals govern the party while acknowledging their importance. The Opposition Leader explained to Poloff how he invited several individuals, including former PRG members and current MPs Peter David and Nazim Burke, to join the NDC in the 1990s when the party's political fortunes were poor. Thomas hoped that their energy and intelligence would help reinvigorate the NDC, which it appears they did. The NDC went from being completely shut out of Parliament in the 1999 election to coming just a few votes short of winning in 2003. Today, NDC Parliamentarian Peter David is considered by many to be the most popular political figure in Grenada.

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The Political Prisoner and His Jailer  
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¶7. (C) Tillman Thomas and Peter David are the oddest of political couples. Thomas is a former political prisoner jailed by the PRG for starting an independent newspaper; David is a former PRG member who remained in the Government even after the 1983 assassination of Prime Minister Maurice Bishop, the event that spurred the U.S. intervention. David is a charismatic figure, a populist politician constantly out in the streets of his constituency pressing the flesh. With his shaved head and scruffy beard, the 49-year-old David

stands in sharp contrast to the 59-year-old Thomas, debonair in a suit and neatly trimmed gray mustache. Reserved and soft-spoken, Thomas presents a dignified character compared to the fast-talking David.

18. (C) In Grenada's next election, Tillman Thomas will present the statesmanlike face of the NDC, offering an alternative to PM Keith Mitchell. Peter David's popularity, however, makes him the bigger threat to the ruling New National Party (NNP). In an attempt to neutralize David, the Government has taken legal action to have him removed from Parliament for having dual Canadian-Grenadian citizenship. The matter is currently being argued in court (ref B).

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Opposition May Win the Next Election  
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19. (C) The NDC could win the next election, according to several political observers. The nation has had 11 years of Keith Mitchell, during which Grenada has seen him go from a shining light to a corrupt politician (ref A), in the opinion of many. Even Mitchell's own Minister of State for National Security, Einstein Louison, admitted to Poloff that the Government has had a bit of a problem with corruption but hastened to add that this is being brought under control. Corruption, and the nation's weak economy, are sure to be key issues that could help the NDC in the next election. The problem for the opposition is a lack of campaign funds, according to party leaders Thomas and David.

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Comment  
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110. (C) The Grenada opposition's fear that the USG may view it as too leftist, perhaps even as a threat to stability, appears to come from an exaggerated perception of Keith Mitchell's influence. The PM has been successful in frightening some Grenadians with his warnings about the former Marxist revolutionaries in the NDC, a tactic he has used to great effect during elections. Opposition leaders believe that the PM may have had similar success in scaring the USG, when, in reality, Mitchell's PRG bogeymen and coup d'etat rantings have had the effect of making him appear a less than reliable interlocutor.

111. (C) Despite the PM's attempt to paint the opposition as beholden to a cabal of extremists, the NDC has been successful in presenting itself as a credible alternative to the ruling party. The efforts of the opposition leadership have been largely responsible for this result, although they have received considerable assistance from a PM who, by both the appearance and the real possibility of being corrupt, has done a great deal of damage to the image of the ruling party and himself.

KRAMER